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TELEGRAM

February 26, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 941 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: ELAB, PREL, PHUM, PGOV, SOCI, CVIS
Captions: None
Subject: UAE DRAFTS LABOR UNION REGULATIONS
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 00941

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CXABU:
ACTION: ECON
INFO: P/M AMB DCM POL
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INFO: FCS

DISSEMINATION: ECON
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM: RAALBRIGHT
DRAFTED: ECON: GARANA
CLEARED: ECON: TEWILLIAMS

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R 260839Z FEB 03
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RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC
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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, DRL AND EB/CBA
STATE PASS OPIC/OPIC INTERNATIONAL POLICY DEPARTMENT FOR
VIRGINIA GREEN AND HARVEY HAMBURG
USDOC FOR 4530/ITA/MAC/ONE/DGUGLIELMI,
4520/ITA/MAC/ONE/CLOUSTAUNAU,
4500/ITA/MAC/DAS/WILLIAMSON,
3131/CS/OIO/ANESA

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: UAE DRAFTS LABOR UNION REGULATIONS

11. (U) The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs completed the final draft of a proposal permitting the creation of full-fledged labor unions, on 2/24. The plan will be reviewed by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf before a final proposal is submitted to the Cabinet. After approval by the Cabinet, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will enact a bylaw

to institute the new policy. The Ministry will also establish a new department responsible for handling matters related to labor unions.

¶2. (U) Under the draft proposal, the Labour Ministry will establish membership conditions for new unions. A worker is defined as a "person who works in a public or private organization and gets paid for his work." Groups of twenty or more nationals working in a profession or trade will be permitted to organize to protect their rights and interests. Organizations will be allowed to join Arab or international trade unions and the proposal also refers to the possibility of establishing a unified labor federation in the UAE. Expatriate laborers working in the UAE for more than six years will be allowed to join as associate members but will not be permitted to vote or contest elections.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The draft proposal by the Labour Ministry is another step in the right direction by the UAEG to bring domestic labor laws into conformity with international standards. While workers here continue to have considerable rights of association -- and there have even been strikes (often by expatriates over non-payment of wages) -- these new proposals will officially ensure workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. The Embassy will follow-up with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on the draft proposal and monitor its movement through the government.

Wahba